



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES**

**FEBRUARY 26, 2018**

**HB 5169**

**AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD**

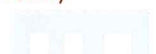
Representative Fleischmann, Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher and Members of the Committee, thank you for your time, and the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 5169.

My name is Terry Nowakowski, Chief Operating Officer of the Partnership for Strong Communities; a statewide nonprofit policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ending homelessness, expanding affordable housing, and building strong communities in Connecticut. The Partnership coordinates and manages the Reaching Home Campaign; the statewide campaign to end homelessness, which implements the federal Opening Doors plan in Connecticut.

I am testifying in support of an Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood, particularly in regard to amending Section 1. Subsection (a) of section 19a-79 of the general statutes, effective July 1, 2018. The recommendations will enact an exemption period of up to ninety days, in which homeless children and youth will have the opportunity to provide documentation of health and immunization records when enrolling in childcare services.

As you know, families are currently required to provide documentation of health and immunization prior to childcare enrollment. Often, families experiencing homelessness do not have immediate access to these records. In addition to the lack of immediate access, other challenges such as lack of employment and housing stability create challenges for parents to secure new employment. Therefore, immediate access to childcare means one less barrier preventing parents from seeking employment, participating in job training, searching for new permanent housing and completing other necessary tasks to resolve homelessness and stabilize their family lives. The recommendations put forth will provide a streamlined process, and access to immediate childcare which benefits the child, parents and our communities.

Furthermore, timely childcare allows parents to focus on critical tasks and assists the child's entire household to exit homelessness more rapidly. In turn, this legislation will benefit our public systems, such as schools and emergency rooms that are often taxed with additional demands when families remain homeless. Ultimately, this policy change will positively impact ending family homelessness, influence the well-being of children and benefit our society by alleviating some burden on our public systems.



While our state has much to be proud of, there is more work to be done in order to maintain the progress we have made and reach our future goals. Connecticut continues to be in a place where critical decisions must be made, and the Partnership respectfully requests that the Education Committee continue to support legislation that will benefit communities and further the goal of ending homelessness among families in our state.

Thank you, for the opportunity to submit this testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you have.

Sincerely,

**Terry Nowakowski, Chief Operating Officer**

Partnership for Strong Communities

[terry@pschousing.org](mailto:terry@pschousing.org)

860-244-0066

